



**Public Facilities
Utilities and Services**

PUBLIC FACILITIES, UTILITIES AND SERVICES

Introduction

Public facilities are provided to ensure the safety and well-being of the residents of Bennet. Public facilities provide citizens with social, cultural, educational, health care, law enforcement, fire protection and recreational facilities to meet the needs of the area. Public utilities provide water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer and solid waste disposal for residents of Bennet.

The purpose of this section is to determine the present capacity of all public facilities, utilities and services, and compare these capacities with the present need. We will also compare the future adequacy of these facilities, utilities and services to meet future estimated demands within the planning period, and recommend improvements where community facilities are not considered adequate for present or future needs.

Education

Education is extremely important and the need for a broadly-based education with emphasis on technical and human relations skills is apparent in our society. Standards developed by educators and planners can provide guidance in the creation of, and additions to, the community's educational facilities. The school in Bennet should meet the following standards/guidelines:

- Schools should be centrally located
- Schools should not be located near high traffic or heavily concentrated areas with high noise levels
- Land acquisition should be made with future expansion in mind
- Adequate open space should be available to students

The Village of Bennet is part of school district OR-1, a combined district including Bennet and Palmyra. The elementary school is located in Bennet and the junior-senior high school is in Palmyra. Bus service is provided between the schools. The office of the superintendent is located in Palmyra, and there is a principal at each of the schools.

The Bennet Elementary building was completed in August of 1982. It was attached to a gymnasium that was completed in 1963. The building currently meets the majority of educational needs of the district with the exception of a space for a computer lab. Space for future expansion and playground/parking facilities is very limited. Current enrollment is 247 children, which is 76% of the estimated maximum capacity of the facility.

The Palmyra building was remodeled in 1982 and an addition was built that included a gymnasium, locker rooms, industrial arts/vocational agriculture shop, kitchen and administrative office. This site is also limited in terms of space for parking, and the athletic field does not contain enough room to allow for a regulation track. The Palmyra High School current enrollment is 234 students, which is 78% of the estimated maximum capacity for the facility. The School District estimates the useful life of the

Bennet building and the Palmyra addition to be 60 years. The old portion of the Palmyra building is expected to last 20 years, however it will need additional renovation to comply with the federal American Disability Act (ADA). Both of these facilities should meet the need of the district for a number of years. A six year projection of school age children is shown on Table 15.

Table 15 - Estimate of School Age Population

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>
1993-94	457
1994-95	482
1995-96	510
1996-97	510
1997-98	505
1998-99	510

Source: District OR-1

The pupil/teacher ratio is 14/1 which is considered sufficient to allow students to have adequate contact with their teachers. Class sizes are such that they provide a positive learning environment. With an average of 18 students per classroom, staff members are able to relate to their students on a personal basis.

The instructional program of the schools is in compliance with the requirements of the State Department of Education. The implementation of the Differentiated Curriculum in the elementary grades has helped to supplement the curriculum by offering extended opportunities for learning to each student. The Drug Abuse Resistance Program (DARE) strengthens the decision making skills in 5th and 6th grades. The high school computer lab provides computer technology that enhances the total instructional program. The junior/senior high activities program offers a wide range of activities that meet the needs and interests of the majority of students. These programs are managed by competent and qualified coaches, sponsors, and advisors. A need still exists to examine a way of providing advanced courses and meeting the needs of gifted children. The school district should strive to become a part of the interactive distance learning and Internet connectivity projects now being deployed by the State Department of Education through the local Educational Service Unit.

The District is currently developing a Strategic Plan for the future. Objectives to be implemented are to develop and provide the integration of technology into all areas of the curriculum; to lower the percentage of dropouts; to increase family involvement in the student learning process; to develop partnerships between the schools and businesses; to provide skills for the transition from school into productive members of society; to ensure that all students enter school ready to learn; and to develop a plan to provide facilities that address the needs of the District.

Medical Facilities and Services

Residents of the Village of Bennet have access to excellent medical facilities in Lincoln, approximately 15 miles northwest of the Village. Present facilities include St. Elizabeth

Community Health Center, Lincoln General Hospital, Bryan Memorial Hospital, Veterans Administration Medical Center and the Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital.

These hospitals, with the exception of Madonna, are equipped with emergency rooms and a helicopter pad for emergency patient transport. Other services provided by the hospitals include acute care, cardiac unit, obstetrics and gynecology, outpatient care, pediatrics, pathology and radiology.

Volunteer Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) services are provided to the Village through the Bennet Rural Fire District. Of the thirty volunteer members, twenty are EMT trained and act as Rapid Responders. Eastern Ambulance Service, based in Lincoln, provides transport services.

The Lincoln-Lancaster County Public Health Department offers various services to the residents of Bennet and Lancaster County. In addition, those students living in Otoe County are eligible for services if they attend the elementary school in Bennet.

The Public Health Nurses hold a clinic in Bennet at the Community Church on the second Thursday of each month from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm. Averaging 12 visits per month, they provide counseling, blood pressure check, basic screening (blood sugar, hemoglobin, etc.), and free immunizations. They visit the Bennet Elementary School twice a month. The school has a 99% compliance for immunizations.

The Health Department provides several programs available to qualified area residents. A Child Health Clinic is available to families meeting the financial guidelines. Available by appointment only, this service covers physicals for sports and requires travel to Lincoln. A Primary Care Clinic is available by appointment for those meeting the qualifications of the food stamp program. In-home assessment may be requested by a client or a concerned party. Emphasis has changed in recent years as needs for the elderly are serviced by other agencies. The emphasis now is on working with the new and growing young families.

Churches

A church can provide programs for all age groups and can offer both active participation and passive observation. A church can also create a "sense of community" through its secular as well as its sacred programs.

Bennet has only one church in the town, a community church, which is a union of three denominations: Methodist, Presbyterian and Church of Christ. The Community Church serves a large sector of Bennet residents, with a membership of approximately 350 and an average attendance of about 85.

The church building itself is an unusual facility. It was known as the "South Church", and in 1955 was moved to its present site where the "North Church" once stood. Extensive remodeling was done at that time, which included adding an educational unit and a brick exterior. The building is well maintained and is in excellent condition. Total land area for the church site is about one-quarter acre. Recent improvements include an easy access ramp, elevator service, new metal roofing and paved parking lot.

There are other religious facilities in the rural Bennet area. Country Bible Church, located approximately four miles southwest of Bennet, has an average attendance of

200. The Trinity Lutheran Church, located approximately 5 miles north of Bennet, has a membership of 500 and an average attendance of 150.

Parks and Recreation

Recreational opportunities and the availability of open play space are important in enhancing a community's "quality of life". The community's role in adequately planning for open space and providing a full range of recreational opportunities directly impact community and economic development activities.

The Bennet city park, a 1.6 acre site, has picnic tables, a picnic shelter with a concrete floor, a small band shell, playground equipment such as a tornado slide, various swings, a merry-go-round, a sand volleyball court and restroom facilities. Camping facilities are advertised on a sign on Highway 2, and travelers often use the park for overnight camping during the summer months. No special facilities such as hot showers and trailer hookups are offered for campers. The park does have a grassy lawn and many shade trees.

A half-block to the west of the park, with a residential strip intervening, is a public T-ball diamond on a half-block site. Concessions and restrooms are located at this park.

The Village ball field is located on the south side of Bennet, near the Legion Hall. The ball field was recently improved with a new outfield fence and electronic scoreboard. This facility has modern restrooms and a concession stand. The development of a second ball field is being explored which would alleviate periodic scheduling problems.

Other recreational facilities are located at the elementary school and include an outdoor basketball/tennis court and playground equipment similar to the Village park.

Communications

Developing an adequate internal communications system is important for a small town. The official newspaper of the Village is *The Voice* which maintains a satellite office in Bennet. The *Lincoln Journal* and *Lincoln Star* also provide daily delivery to homes in the Village.

Local notices are posted at the Village Office, the Post Office and sometimes local businesses. Items of importance to all residents of the Village are also included in the water bill at the discretion of the Village Board. A Village newsletter, compiled by the Bennet Development Group, is also currently being distributed. It is known as GAB - "Growing Awareness in Bennet".

The City of Lincoln-Lancaster County, in cooperation with Nebraska ETV, has submitted a proposal to the federal government for grant monies to fund, among other things, Internet connectivity to a location in each incorporated community in Lancaster County. This project is the first step in a much larger proposition that will bring government information and services closer to the rural areas of Nebraska. The Village stands to see great benefits from this service, as it will help citizens and the local government keep in better touch and communicate more effectively with the higher levels of County and State government.

Public Assembly

Various facilities within the Village of Bennet offer available areas for assembly suitable to a variety of events including family gathering, sporting events and meetings. The Bennet Elementary School offers the use of facilities including meeting areas and the gymnasium for a fee. The Village park and Village ball parks are also available for rent.

The American Legion offers rental of their building which includes kitchen facilities. This hall is the site of senior citizen activities. Every Thursday a dinner is sponsored by a Lancaster County program, and twice a month an informal pot luck dinner is held.

Public Safety

Police Protection

The Village of Bennet relies on State and County law enforcement. Access to law enforcement is through the 911 communications system. The Village Board has recently entered into an interlocal agreement with Lancaster County which provides a supplementary sheriff patrol in the Village. Two public safety programs exist: Neighborhood Watch and McGruff House.

Fire Protection

The Bennet Rural Fire District, with a service area of 154 square miles, serves the Village of Bennet. A fire hall, completed in 1982, stores all vehicles and equipment, and has meeting room facilities. The fire department consists of 30 volunteer members who receive on-going training. The fire department responds to approximately 43 fire, 63 medical and 25 miscellaneous calls per year. The response time averages 4 minutes.

The Bennet Rural Fire District currently maintains the following equipment:

- 1970 International 1200 Tanker Truck
- High Pressure Lift Bags
- 1972 Ford 750 gpm Pumper Truck
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus
- 1985 GMC Suburban Rescue Vehicle
- 1983 Ford 4X4 Grass Rig
- 1974 Chevy 4X4 Grass Rig
- Jaws of Life
- 1978 Hazard Material Utility Van

Source: Bennet Rural Fire District, 1994

Public Administration Facilities

Public administration facilities serve the citizens of the community as a location to conduct the business of government. In Bennet, the Village Office is located at 685 Monroe street. This building is used as an office for the Village Clerk, meeting location for town meetings, and storage facility for Village municipal records. It does not currently comply with all ADA requirements.

Library Services

Residents of the Village, as well as the surrounding area, are offered library services through the Lincoln Public Library System. The closest branch, Gere Library, is located at 56th and Normal Boulevard. As an extension of the Lincoln Library System, a Bookmobile serves the Village of Bennet every other Wednesday afternoon. A variety of reading materials and services are offered. Table 16 gives circulation data for the Bookmobile.

Table 16 - Bookmobile Circulation

	Bookmobile Circulation	Avg. Cir. per Visit	Total Customers
Sept 92 - Aug 93	2996	166	781
Sept 93 - Aug 94	4177	167	910

Source: Lincoln City Library

United States Post Office

The U.S. Post Office in Bennet is located at 605 Madison Street. This was originally an old bank building which was purchased and remodeled by the Village. It is leased to the U.S. Postal Service for \$175 a month. Interior improvements were made in 1993. Services provided are postal box delivery to the citizens of Bennet, with 180 postal boxes available, and one rural route serving over 300 rural box holders.

Public Utilities

Water

The Village of Bennet currently purchases water from the Lancaster Rural Water District No. 1. In the "Water Purchase-Sale Agreement", the District agrees to provide water in a quantity not to exceed 180,000 gallons per day and at a rate not to exceed 150 gallons per minute. These figures represent maximum numbers and are only to be exceeded under emergency conditions. During the last several years the largest amount of water used was 1,695,000 gallons for a single month (56,000 per day). The Village currently only uses approximately one third of the amount it has available. Unless current usage patterns change, the water supply should be adequate to support moderate growth in the Village. The water is monitored, in accordance with state and local law, by the Water District and the Village semi-annually for nitrates, bacteria, lead, copper and other critical elements. To date, the levels of these contaminants have remained at acceptable levels and the water has not required treatment.

The Village also maintains one shallow well south of town. This water is unacceptable for human consumption due to high nitrates. It is used to fill fire trucks and sold in bulk to the Farmers Co-op Elevator and also offered in bulk to private individuals for non-consumptive use.

The Village owns the 100,000 gallon water tower which was built in 1983. It was financed by a bond in the amount of \$530,000, payable in annual installments of \$31,149 including interest at 5 percent. The final installment will be made in 2023.

Water service is gravity fed through a series of 6, 4 and 2 inch water lines. These lines are reported to be in good condition.

Sanitary Sewer Distribution System

The sewer distribution routes in Bennet are gravity fed direct to a new pump station (1992) which is southeast of Bennet. The sewer lines are maintained by the Village as needed. The only noted deficiency has been the occurrence of sluggish drainage in the downtown area.

Wastewater Treatment

The Village operates a three-cell, controlled discharge lagoon sewage treatment system located approximately one-half mile east of the Village. This system is designed for a population up to 1,200. The treatment system is considered adequate for current needs and has an average life expectancy of 25 years before an additional cell will be required. No sludge treatment is necessary.

The treatment system was built in 1992 with a grant/bond combination. Federal assistance was obtained through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Construction Grants for Wastewater Treatment Works. The total bond amount was \$140,000, with the final payment to be made in 2005.

Storm Sewer

Surface drainage exists in the majority of Bennet. There is a limited storm sewage system in the downtown area. The drainage in the Village flows primarily south, directly or indirectly to the nearby Little Nemaha River. There have been numerous complaints by citizens regarding inadequate drainage. No storm drainage plan is currently on file.

Solid Waste Collection

The Village collection site is located on Highway 43 at the southerly edge of Bennet. Household wastes are emptied into a large compactor and are transported by contract service to a Lincoln Lancaster County landfill site. Clean wood, tree branches and similar items are placed in an open ditch and periodically burned. A compost pile is located at the site for grass clippings, weeds, straw and manure. Recyclables can be left in the designated bins at the site.

Village residents currently pay \$3 monthly for use of the facility. Persons living outside of Village limits may use the dump for a \$60 annual fee.

Electricity

Nebraska City Utilities has been providing electric service to the Village for 50 years. They own and maintain the system. Homeowners are billed directly and the Village of Bennet is included as a customer. There are nearly 300 customers in the Village.

A coal powered generation plant is located south of Nebraska City. Coal for the plant is delivered by the Burlington Northern Railroad through Bennet. This use of the rail line enhances the ability to keep rail service to the local Farmers Cooperative Elevator and other businesses along the line.

The general response time to an emergency during the day is 45 minutes. Between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. response time is 1 hour 45 minutes. A free tree cutting service is also provided where the maintenance of the utility lines is affected.

Natural Gas

In 1989, Peoples Natural Gas began service to the Village of Bennet. New gas lines were installed throughout the Village and customers are billed directly.

Although a majority of residents subscribe to natural gas, some residents use propane service offered by the Farmers Cooperative Elevator. Rates for natural gas and propane are not governed by the Village.

Television

Six local channels are available via public access. Cable television is provided by Douglas Cable of Topeka, Kansas. Customers are billed directly.

Telephone

Bennet is served by the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company which provides a variety of telephone and telecommunications services.

Conclusions

The Village of Bennet has proven through time to be a well established community. Necessary public facilities, utilities, and services are provided either in the Village or in the nearby Lincoln area. These appear to be adequate for the current population; however, the Village must prepare to provide for expanding needs as the population grows.

Recommendations

1. Storm drainage has been a problem in the Village, and a sore area for many of its residents, for several years. The Board should evaluate the storm drainage, and take the necessary corrective measures to alleviate the problems associated with storm drainage.
2. A periodic review of law enforcement should be conducted to determine if service is adequate and make necessary adjustments.

3. The Village office should be brought into compliance with ADA requirements.
4. Additional park and recreational facilities should be provided as the population increases. Potential sites should be identified and then developed as needed. The Village should maintain contact with the State regarding the possible trail along the railroad.